

LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

**Senate Committee on Education
Testimony of Senator Lena C. Taylor
SB 349-Transcript Accountability Act
February 21, 2008**

As the Senate author on this critical legislation, thank you for the opportunity to speak to a serious problem plaguing our current Parental Choice Program. Initially becoming aware of this problem when a number of parents contacted my office, I simply could not and will not overlook the devastating impact, that the lack of proper record keeping by some Choice schools, have caused.

To ask a child to come to school, work hard, excel and do well, culminating with either advancement to the next grade level or graduation, and then to lose, mishandle, not make available, or discard proof of that student's work or that they ever attended the Choice school is unconscionable.

Yet we have numerous and clear examples of this absurdity everyday! There is a presumption, whether in a doctor's office, banking establishment, or employment situation, that accurate records that reflect our personal information will be kept in order and made available upon demand.

So imagine the horror of a child, that has completed the necessary graduation requirements from a Choice school, learning that their college admission has been denied because the institution can not obtain the necessary proof of their records, grades, yet alone graduation.

Imagine further, that same child being told, that they will also have to enroll in the local technical college and take high school classes to be considered for college enrollment in the future.

Whether it is, graduation, transfers between schools, or changes in attendance from a Choice school back to a Milwaukee Public school, many children are suffering from a gap in the law that leaves them unprotected from adults who willfully place their academic futures in jeopardy.

SB 349 will protect the many children and their families, who participate in the Choice program, from a similar fate. By requiring that schools maintain progress records for each student, for at least five years, and transfer those records to Milwaukee Public Schools, should that Choice school close, only make sense. Who could argue with a requirement to issue a diploma or certificate of completion after a student has met the necessary requirements for high school graduation.

Therefore, I strongly urge passage of this bill. I want, what we all should want...for Wisconsin children and their families to be assured, that not only does their education come with choices, it also comes with some guarantees.



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: State Senator John Lehman, Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Kim Wadas, Associate Director 

DATE: February 21, 2008

RE: Senate Bill 349, Pupil Records in Milwaukee Parental Choice Program Schools

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) opposes Senate Bill 349, which would place new compliance requirements on schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP).

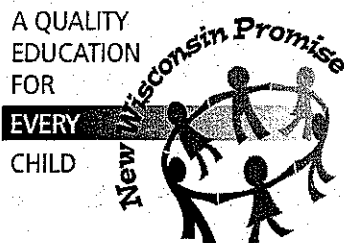
While the WCC supports providing information to parents, guardians, and students regarding a pupil's record, this bill is unnecessary as Catholic schools within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, as well as other MPCP schools, already make progress report information available to parents and students.

Catholic schools support a parent's role as the primary educator of their child. To aid in this role, Catholic schools regularly sent out progress reports detailing course information, pupil grades, and other particulars regarding a pupil's instruction. All Archdiocesan schools issue high school diplomas upon completion of instruction and transfer student records, upon notification, to other educational institutions. Catholic schools within the Archdiocese can also provide copies of records, such as immunization records, to a parent, guardian, or pupil upon request.

However, on occasion, there are valid reasons to delay the transfer of pupil records. For example, individuals who are exiting the eighth grade usually receive notice of their acceptance into a secondary school program in November or December of their eighth grade school year. Secondary schools may request pupil records for eighth graders entering their school at that time. However, schools may delay in providing this information to the requesting school until final grades and attendance records for the semester are gathered. This bill does not allow for flexibility in these situations and would severely punish a MPCP school for noncompliance.

Finally, we note that this bill would require a certified public accountant, who conducts the independent financial audit of a school, to also be responsible for determining a school's compliance with the requirements of SB 349. The WCC supports maintaining student privacy. Therefore, we question whether this is the most appropriate means of ensuring compliance while maintaining student privacy.

The WCC appreciates the opportunity to provide this testimony and urges you to oppose SB 349.



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

Senate Committee on Education
February 21, 2008

Department of Public Instruction Testimony on 2007 Senate Bill 349

Thank you to Chairperson Lehman and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Jennifer Kammerud. I am the legislative liaison for the Department of Public Instruction and am here today to testify in support of Senate Bill 349 (SB 349).

Records required to be kept by private schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program under SB 349 include courses taken and grades received, as well as records regarding attendance, immunizations, and extracurricular activities. These records are critical to the educational success of a student as well as a student's well-being. Without immunization records a school does not know who may be at risk when certain illnesses sweep through a population. Without records related to attendance it is difficult for schools to determine if there is a pattern of truancy. Without records regarding courses and grades it is difficult to track academic progress and plan appropriately so that students can achieve subject mastery and ultimately graduate. Schools providing a quality education should be keeping these records.

The department has received inquiries from students and their parents regarding access to records when choice schools have closed. In situations where there were records, we worked with Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to allow for the transfer of records to MPS. The department feels MPS is a logical repository for these records.

The requirement that high school diplomas or certificates must be issued is a necessary one. The department regularly receives calls from students who claim to have graduated from a private school in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program but who do not have a diploma, certificate, or transcripts. These students are left unable to apply for certain jobs and have difficulties accessing post-secondary education.

A successful school should be meeting the requirements contained in this bill. These records are important and need to be kept.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.